

Grasmere Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109420
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	356538
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Mingo
Headteacher	Valerie Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 18 lessons led by 12 Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners. Meetings were held with staff and governors, and inspectors looked at school documentation, including policies and arrangements for safeguarding children, the school improvement plan, individual attendance records, a range of evidence on children's work over the current year, and details of their progress and attainment over the past three years. The inspection team spoke with parents and carers and analysed 44 parental questionnaires, as well as questionnaires completed by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How does the school ensure that its key assessments of ability on entry and at the end of the Nursery year are accurate?
- How effectively does the school meet the needs of children who face barriers to their learning and those who find learning easy?
- How well do the wraparound care, the toddler and baby unit and the special educational needs resource form continuous and consistent provision that supports children's learning and development and their welfare?

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school of its type. The school provides a wide range of family support services, including care before and after school known as Wraparound, and a day-care unit for babies and toddlers up to the age of three which is open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm. This unit, registered as Grasmere Nursery and Tadpoles Baby and Toddler Unit and known as Tadpoles, is housed in a separate self-contained building. Both of these services are included in this inspection. A children's centre, which is also on the site and is managed by the headteacher, was inspected separately. 'Tadpoles' and the school both accommodate children for individual combinations of mornings and/or afternoons or full days.

The school also manages specially resourced provision for between six to eight full-time equivalent places for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, six places were filled, mostly by children with autistic spectrum disorders or physical disabilities, all currently undergoing assessment for a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is a higher proportion than usual for schools of this type. A large majority of the children have White British backgrounds but, while very few speak English as an additional language, a number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds are represented. The children from the 'Tadpoles' unit go on to make up around one third of the nursery roll, with others being admitted from home or other local pre-school settings. Children move on to a number of other settings for their Reception year. A new Chair of the Governing Body recently took up her post and several other governors are new to the role.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where children achieve well so that, by the time they leave, most attain above expectations for their age in most areas of learning. Children's good progress is the result of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. Children are reaping the benefits of the school's work to provide completely continuous and integrated provision from babyhood, and this supports working families very well, underpinning the school's outstanding engagement with parents and carers. Comments written in the parents' and carers' questionnaires were almost all positive. 'I have nothing but praise for this wonderful nursery,' said one, similar to others. 'All the staff are terrific. My child loves it.'

A warm ethos of care is evident across the whole school, in the Tadpoles, in the Wraparound, and in the nursery school. As a result, children develop good personal skills from an early age. They thoroughly enjoy their time in school. Most children happily leave their parents or carers, confident in the supportive relationships they have with staff. All the staff are positive role models. Children quickly develop an excellent understanding of good hygiene routines and have a very good understanding of the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating.

Children with complex special educational needs are fully integrated into classroom learning. They achieve as well as their classmates, from their differing starting points, because the specially resourced provision is well led and care is fully coordinated. The philosophy of integration means that resources installed for the special unit, such as the sensory room and the sensory garden, are used well to promote learning for the whole school. Good partnerships extend the expertise, experience and resources needed to ensure that each child's needs are met. For instance, links with the children's centre on site are strong, and help from a local gardener has resulted in the children having an expertly created 'wibbly-wobbly path' to explore in the school's outside orchard. The nursery teaching is good and some is outstanding, and most activities are suitably challenging for most children. However, there is not enough formalised extension to learning for the more-able children to help them learn how to link sounds and letters. This is one reason why progress is less strong in this aspect of children's learning. These children are suitably challenged in other areas of learning.

The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation is perceptive and accurate. The headteacher's clear vision for the school is shared well among staff, and all contribute to the drive for improvement through coordinated development plans. The school can point to significant progress on the issues for improvement highlighted in the last inspection. The system to measure key assessments on entry and exit and to track progress is well moderated and accurate, but is inefficient. The headteacher's successful focus on developing integrated and continuous care, inside and outside, has meant that she has had limited time for checking the quality of teaching and monitoring progress in each area

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of learning in lessons, and leadership of teaching and learning is not distributed. In consequence, teachers have too few opportunities to share best practice and make good teaching even better.

The governing body performs its role satisfactorily, but its monitoring of the work of the school has not been robust. However, the accurate self-evaluation, the successful focus on continuous integrated provision, and the good outcomes evident for children, show that the school is providing good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine teaching and learning and improve its leadership and management so that:
 - It is fully challenging for the more able in linking sounds with letters
 - best practice in teaching is promulgated and weaknesses eliminated through sharper observation, feedback and follow-up focused on the progress children make
 - more staff carry out monitoring checks across the school to ensure progress is good in each area of learning.
- Increase the effectiveness of the governing body in monitoring the work of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

When they start in the nursery, children's skills and experiences across the areas of learning are as expected for children of this age. Those who enter from Tadpoles have made good progress there. When children transfer to Reception classes in their chosen primary schools, their skills and experiences are above what is expected for their age across most areas of learning. Children's good progress, particularly in their personal skills, their excellent awareness of being healthy and their above average attendance ensure they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This includes those who speak English as an additional language because they are quickly made to feel part of the class and given individual help. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who attend the specially resourced provision make good progress alongside their peers, because they develop confidence from being fully integrated into learning with their class.

Laughter is a feature in all the classrooms, demonstrating children's enjoyment of their learning. In the sensory room, children played excitedly in the igloo in the ice and snow area, in learning about very different lives in the wider world. The light and dark area provided similar understanding of contrasts common across the world. Exploring outside in the orchard, they showed delight at all the new experiences presented by spring emerging. All these experiences also promote their spiritual development well. For their age, children make a strong contribution to their school community and understand about why they give to charity to support local, national and global issues.

Work with linking sounds and letters, which is largely on an individual basis, is thoroughly enjoyed, but some children are not challenged in this aspect of learning and this is reflected in slower progress. Children's calculation skills show significant progress recently,

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with a number of children able to count on beyond 20, and some already able to calculate 'one less' and 'one more'.

Nearly all children make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They follow instructions and know the actions they must take to ensure their own safety and that of others. They successfully learn to share with and respect those around them, behave well, and develop an understanding of right and wrong. They learn about their own and different cultures through celebrating a range of festivals. Children were excited about dressing up in their work on celebrations. 'I'm at a wedding,' said one with conviction, 'And that's why I've got this long shiny dress on and we shall all dance.'

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance ¹	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The good range of successful adult-led and child-chosen activities capture children's interest and provide exciting opportunities for them to develop and to practise skills across all areas of learning. The indoor and outdoor activities complement each other well. Outside resources have improved significantly. For instance, the orchard is a well-loved area where children, including those with complex needs, can have plenty of outside adventure. Staff support children effectively in their chosen activities, carefully selecting

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the point at which they intervene to help focus and extend learning. This was seen, for example, when nursery children experimented with planting pots of seeds with compost, where they talked confidently about their activity and linked it to a seed-planting sequence. Staff model language well and encourage children to sustain their concentration and follow instructions promptly. Staff draw on ongoing observations of children's learning to shape and refine the plans for the next steps in learning. Learning journey records are established and are well illustrated with photographs and comments.

In Tadpoles, babies and toddlers thoroughly enjoy exploring a stimulating range of areas and equipment in a caring environment. Wraparound care in the nursery school building offers a healthy breakfast and provides a supportive and caring before- and after-school experience. The school has good induction arrangements which include a visit from every family and some home visits. The fully flexible attendance arrangements support children and their parents and carers well. Care is taken to ensure times of arrival and departure are recorded to help keep children safe. Good partnerships with the children's centre on site and with outreach workers and other agencies provide good continuous care and support, and this is reflected in children's well-developed personal skills. Staff work closely with parents and carers to establish routines and to support individual children's medical needs. Children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are promptly identified, supported and guided. Staff are actively involved in implementing good specialist programmes and guidance for children attending the specially resourced provision. The nursery has good links with receiving primary schools and prepares children well for their move to Reception classes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

With the wholehearted support of staff, the headteacher is successfully creating a fully cohesive service for those families who use the school's various facilities for their children from babyhood to the age of four. Pivotal in supporting children's good personal development as they happily transfer at the appropriate age from one site facility to another, is the school's excellent engagement with its parents and carers, as well as with children's extended family members. Daily, informal contact with staff complements children's learning journey records and a detailed annual written report. There are good links with the local authority, health services and other specialist services. The school enjoys similarly good links with local primary schools.

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The governing body carries out its duties satisfactorily. Training is being provided to ensure new governors are fully informed about their roles and how to provide enhanced challenge and support. The recent focus has been on ensuring children are safeguarded, and this aspect is good. All the required checks are made on volunteers and staff, and these are recorded correctly on the school's single central record. Training in child protection is regularly updated and the school's procedures are well implemented.

Improvement plans have a clear focus on accurately identified priorities, well supported by staff. The development of assessment systems has helped the leadership pinpoint areas where children's progress can be accelerated. However, there is an inconsistency in provision as more-able children are not sufficiently challenged when linking sounds and letters. As a result, although children make good progress overall the provision of equality of opportunity is similarly inconsistent and is satisfactory. The inspection of the school's promotion of community cohesion fully agrees with the school's view that this aspect is satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are well satisfied with the school. All respondents feel their children are kept safe and helped to be healthy, that the teaching is good and the school fully meets their children's needs. Inspectors looked at the very few concerns raised in the responses. Contact records and other documentation showed that contact with their children's teacher is readily available to help parents and carers to be informed about their children's progress and to support their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Grasmere Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 153 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	61	15	34	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	26	59	18	41	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	36	21	48	5	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	52	19	43	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	59	17	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	39	20	45	5	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	48	21	48	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	11	25	26	59	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	48	22	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	41	19	43	3	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	41	23	52	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	61	14	32	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	57	17	39	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 March 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Grasmere Nursery School, Luton, LU3 2BT

This is a special message for the children to thank them for making the inspectors welcome and the inspectors are asking Mrs Thompson to read it to the children.

Do you remember not long ago that we visited the school to see what you do all day, and to see how good it is to be at your school?

We found that the school is a good school with lots that happens to help you learn. We found that you all behave well and you told us how much you enjoy coming to school. You also said that you really like the adults who look after you. You certainly enjoyed playing in the orchard and in the sensory room. Isn't the igloo good fun?

All the staff take good care of you and want you to do well. They keep a very close eye on how well you are getting on and use this information carefully to plan what you are to learn next. As a result, you all make good progress.

There are two things we have asked the school to do in order to make it even better. The first is to make sure that you have more opportunities, both in the activities which adults lead and those you choose for yourselves, to improve your knowledge of your letter sounds. This is something for you to practise inside, outside and at home.

The other recommendation is to make sure that all those with responsibilities in school, such as governors and the teachers, help Mrs Thompson. They can help her check what is being learned in each class to make sure that everything is as good as it can possibly be.

You can help all the adults make these improvements by listening carefully, working hard and being as helpful as you possibly can. We know just how well you can do this already.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead inspector

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